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ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A Network Auto-Discovery service is provided. In operation, an administrator inputs a set of IP (Internet Protocol) address ranges inside which the distributed system exists. The Auto-Discovery Unit (104) steps 5 through the IP addresses in the ranges testing each one to determine if there is a machine at that IP address. If a machine is found at that address, an exploration process is begun. First, attempts are made to contact a Responder (112) on the machine. If one exists, the Responder (112) accepts the configuration information provided to it. Then the Responder (112) 10 returns a set of objects that describe the hardware and software components of that machine. The returned information contains a list of management applications associated with system components. The Auto-Discovery Unit (104) then stores this information. The location and exploration process is 15 repeated at scheduled intervals indefinitely.

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